



Humanistic & Existential Perspectives

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PSY 249: Psych of Personality

3/30/2023




Announcements

- ▶ Assignment 3 due Next Friday!~
 - ▶ Spring break begins Wednesday so no class next Thursday!
 - ▶ Assignments 4 & 5 will be available soon
- 



Activity: Finding some meaning.

- ▶ Take a few minutes to write a word or phrase that you return to to help motivate yourself or to help you find a sense of meaning in your life. Enter it into slido
 - ▶ What about this word/phrase helps ground and/or motivate you? Why?
 - ▶ Do you feel this word/phrase speaks to your core values and/or a life purpose?
- 




Let's start from the beginning...

- ▶ Kierkegaard (1830s): Interrogating Man's relationship to God and Goodness/Morality. Rejection of truth
- ▶ Nietzsche (1860s): "God is dead" instead a human need to create a "superman" who transcends and saves humanity. Humanity as fundamentally unequal and rooted in suffering
- ▶ Heidegger and Jaspers (1900s-1930s): The importance of human understanding that we are "beings" and that we make meaning in understanding that we will only be here a short time. Meaning often found through trying to connect to an idealized "Being"
- ▶ Sartre (1950s-1970s): Bringing existential theory into psychology using the terms (en-soi "In itself" and Pour-Soi "for itself") Terms used to differentiate ones own consciousness from everything else. Instead the fundamental task for Sartre was to bring the En-Soi and Pour-Soi in harmony with one another. Put simply this means finding a passion, purpose, and living authentically based on moving toward them.

Humanistic & Existential

- ▶ Humanistic theory is rooted in existential **philosophy** while existential **psychology** is a branch of humanistic psychology.
- ▶ The fundamental difference between Humanistic and Existential psychology is based around morality
- ▶ The humanistic perspective assumes that humans are inherently good.
- ▶ Existential perspective assumes that humans are neither bad nor good
- ▶ Both believe humans have agency and choice through consciousness but go about defining what the capacity for choice and the choices themselves mean in very different ways
- ▶ For instance: The existential perspective does not believe in personality traits while the humanistic perspective does.



Important Figures in Existential and Humanistic Psychology

Humanistic

- Carl Rogers: Self-Actualization
- Abraham Maslow: Hierarchy of Needs

Existential

- Viktor Frankl: Logotherapy and Will-to-meaning
- Rollo May: Will, Freedom, and Intentionality

Carl Rogers and Self-Actualization

- ▶ For Carl Rogers the key to understanding personality was to understand each individuals' need for self-actualization.
- ▶ Self-actualization for Rogers was the constant process of moving toward greater independence, authenticity, maturity, and self responsibility.
- ▶ In order to become self-actualizing a person first needs to understand the Self or who we are in relation to the world. It is in Roger's words "a fluid, yet consistent conceptual pattern of our experiential interactions with the environment and the values attached to those experiences"
- ▶ Regarding personality and its development Children are born with actualization potential if met with parents Unconditional Positive Regard they continue forward. If met with Conditional Positive regard this begins the trouble.
- ▶ A child develops an Ideal Self and a Real Self. Congruence is found when a child can take steps toward the merging of the two selves. Incongruence is felt when there is disconnect.



Free Write: Tracing our Ideals

- ▶ Take 5 minutes to describe your ideal self. In other words, who you think you would be if you reached your highest potential.
- ▶ Some questions to write/discuss about after:
 - ▶ Where do these “ideals” come from? (Yourself, parents, culture, media, society, etc)
 - ▶ Is this the ideal self that is truest to who you are, or will you need to change a fundamental piece of yourself?
 - ▶ How does thinking about your ideal self make you feel?

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

- Maslow sought to theorize beyond psychology and developed a more holistic model of need that placed self-actualization at the top
- According to Maslow's model self-actualization could only be achieved when the previous needs were met.
- Maslow felt the lower levels were relatively easily understood however he spent a large amount of his time defining the characteristics of a Self-actualizing person.

Transcendence





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4/4/2023

Announcements

- All assignments available!
- Assignment 5 optional!
- Assignment 3 due Friday! (24hr Grace)
- Differing Perspectives: Trauma-informed Perspective
- Attendance and participation matter



Think of something that you feel has changed your life (for better or worse). This can be a person, an event, something you did, something you heard, a dream, something you felt, an experience anything just so long as it was meaningful to you.

Once you have something discuss How & Why this something changed you.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



Characteristics of Self Actualizing

More efficient perception of reality and relationship to it

Acceptance of Self, Others, and Nature

Spontaneity

Problem-Centering

Need for Privacy & Detachment

Autonomy of Culture and Environment

Continued Appreciation

Peak Experiences

Gemeinschaftsgefühl
(Geh-Mine-shafts-Geh-Full)

Deep interpersonal Relations

Democratic in Character

Knowing means from ends and right from wrong

Unhostile sense of humor

Creativity

Resistance to Enculturation

Do you agree?



Important Figures in Existential and Humanistic Psychology

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- Carl Rogers: Self-Actualization
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Existential

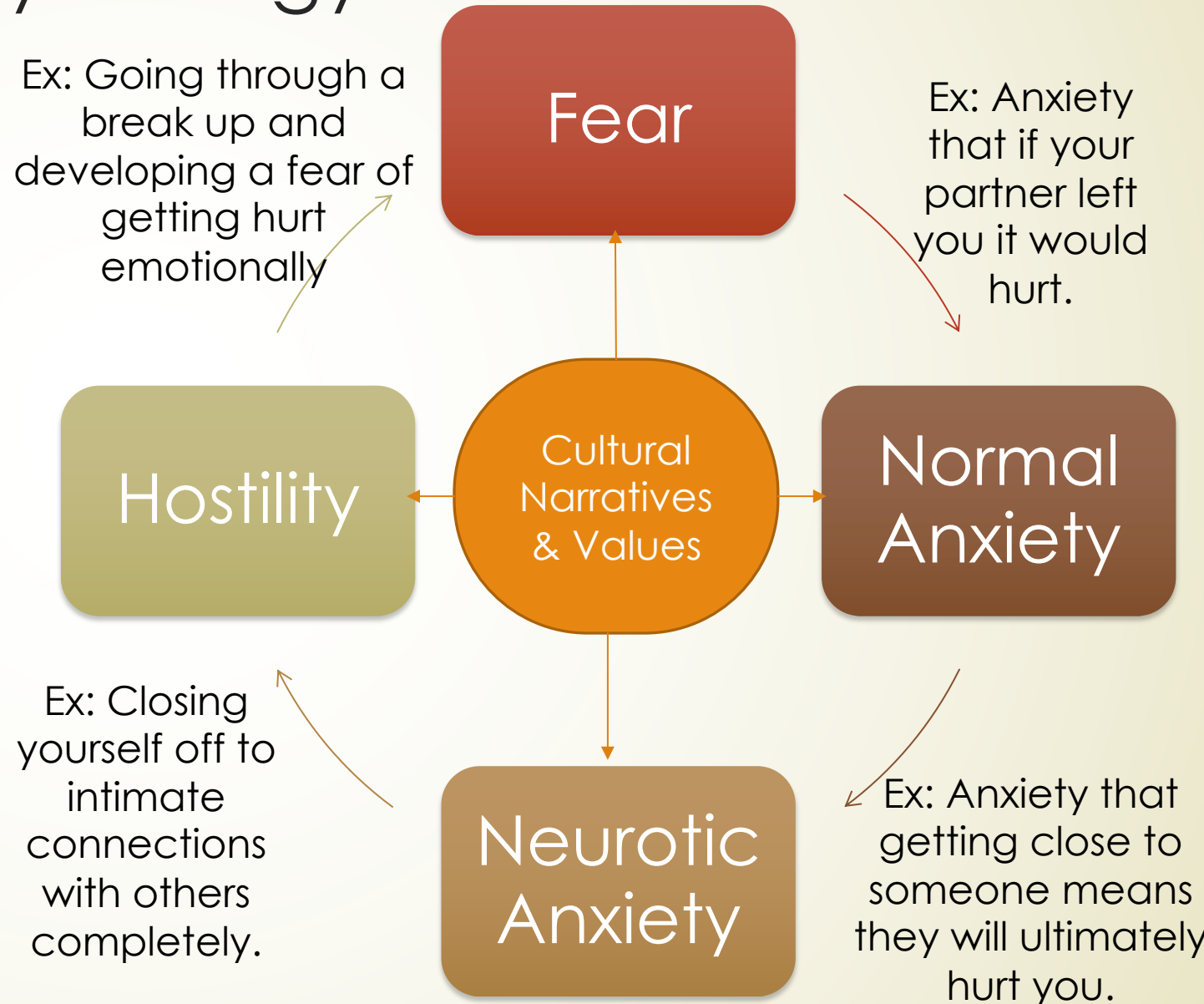
- Viktor Frankl: Logotherapy and Will-to-meaning
- Rollo May: Will, Freedom, and Intentionality

Vicktor Frankl: Logotherapy

- At the heart of Logotherapy is the assumption that each human has within them A **will-to-meaning** or some primary source of someone's motivation in life that they must find and understand deeply.
- Frankl believed one's will-to-meaning can be found in 1 of 3 places: **A deed or work we create**, **a meaningful encounter**, and/or **choosing one's attitude in the face of unavoidable suffering**.
- Naturally, everyone's search for meaning is different and complicated by **Existential Frustration** leading to **Noogenic Neurosis** or psychological fixations, complications, and/or blocks related to finding meaning in one's life.
- **Logotherapy** is the type of therapy intended to deal with these forms of neuroses as well as help the client find meaning. Which involves understanding who a person is.
- In order to do this Logotherapy first identifies **paradoxical intentions** which are cycles of neuroses that create and perpetuate anxiety and incorporate **derefelction** which is a technique to get patients to stop hyper fixating and refocus attention outside of themselves.

Rollo May the Father of Existential Psychology

- ▶ For May Anxiety was the source of all human issues.
- ▶ Anxiety to May “is the apprehension cued by a threat to some value which the individual holds essential to his existence as a personality.”
- ▶ Anxiety can come from any level and in turn create hostility and hardship within a person, in how they interact with the world, and in how they find meaning in life.
- ▶ May differentiates Fear, Normal Anxiety, Neurotic Anxiety, and Hostility




Connecting the Existential to personality

- ▶ May adds to Frankl's "Will-to-meaning" the dimension of "Intentionality". Frankl believed that folks search for meaning innately whereas May concluded that because of anxiety many folks need to be intentional. In other words, they need to CHOOSE to pursue their meaning.
- ▶ With all this in mind take some time to think about one solid goal you have in life. Big or small.
- ▶ Once you have the goal in mind chat in small groups about what's stopping you from accomplishing this goal right now. Focus on these obstacles, boundaries, and complications. Discuss how do they make you feel.

Existentialism and the rise of subjective personality measures

- ▶ Answer these two questions:
 - ▶ When you think of “The Ocean” what comes to mind?
 - ▶ When you think of “Darkness” what comes to mind?
- ▶ If we loosely use Existentialist theories, we can connect the ocean with something abundant and meaningful to people a concept like “Love” and say what you wrote about the ocean is how you perceive love. With darkness if we think of something contested, yet constant we can connect it to something like “Death” and say what you thought about darkness is how you perceive death.
- ▶ Recognize that there is honestly no measureable basis for these associations, but they resonate and feel meaningful for people
- ▶ Existentialism posits that the only real meaning in the world is the meaning people attribute to things.



Pros and Cons: Humanistic and Existential

Pros

- Focuses on the agency/Autonomy that humans have in their own lives
- Pays particular attention to consciousness which ultimately makes us human
- Complex and layered approaches/methods
- Effectively addresses anxiety, depression, neuroses

Cons

- Not the easiest most effective way to measure or group personality because every single person is different
- Largely no hard science backing unless using very corporatized and problematic humanism.
- Difficult to do and even more difficult to fully understand